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EDICIONES
COMPLUTENSE

Befriending Women in Leadership Roles? The Highest Glass Ceiling, Still Unbroken in Usa*

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Abstract. In summer, 2016, feminist scholars in the USA celebrated, as Hillary Clinton became the first woman selected by a major political party (Democratic), to run for president of the USA. They also watched in horror as members of the Republican party chanted at their summer convention “Lock her up!” Everyone agreed that Clinton was highly qualified with thirty plus years of experience working on behalf of women and children in the USA. Concerns expressed were about her trustworthiness. Clinton’s platform was one of unity and inclusion, while the Republican party and their candidate Trump’s platform was one of fear and hate for “others” (non-white Americans). It was depressing during the fall campaign to realize the only reason a woman might be elected president was because the person she was running against was so corrupt and inexperienced, racist, and clearly misogynist. November 9, 2016 brought the USA, and the world, the shock and horror of learning that Hillary Clinton lost the presidential election to Donald Trump, even though she won the popular vote by close to three million more votes. I plan to consider this election as a current example of the horizontal violence that (white) women perpetrate on each other. Through this example, I will offer an extension of my earlier work analyzing the treatment of women faculty in higher education by other women. It seems clear that women still struggle with efforts to befriend rather than perpetrate horizontal violence on each other.

Keywords: Hillary Clinton; Donald Trump; Befriending women; Horizontal violence.

[es] ¿Entablar amistad entre las mujeres líderes? El más alto techo de cristal, aún intacto en los Estados Unidos

Resumen. En el verano de 2016 los académicos feministas estadounidenses celebraban que Hillary Clinton se hubiese convertido en la primera mujer propuesta para la presidencia de Estados Unidos por un partido político de cierto peso, el democrático. Poco después observaron con horror cómo los miembros del partido político republicano le gritaban ¡que la encierren! durante su convención de verano. Todo el mundo sabía que Clinton estaba altamente cualificada con más de treinta años de experiencia trabajando por los intereses de las mujeres y los niños de Norteamérica. Las preocupaciones que se expresaban durante aquella convención giraban más bien en torno a su confiabilidad. La plataforma de Clinton era la de la unidad y la inclusión, mientras que la de Trump era la del miedo y el odio hacia los “otros” (hacia los americanos que no eran blancos). Fue verdaderamente catastrófico el darnos cuenta durante la campaña de otoño de que la única razón por la que una mujer podía ser elegida como presidenta era que la alternativa estuviese encarnada por una persona corrupta e inexperimentada, racista y claramente misógina. El 9 de noviembre de 2016 trajo a los Estados Unidos, y al resto del mundo, la sorpresa y el horror de saber que Hilary Clinton había perdido las elecciones presidenciales en favor de Donald Trump, incluso tras haber ganado el voto popular de más de dos millones de ciudadanos.

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Me gustaría considerar esta elección como un ejemplo actual de la violencia horizontal que las mujeres (blancas) perpetraron entre sí. A través de este ejemplo, ofreceré una extensión de mi trabajo anterior en el que analizaba el tratamiento de la facultad femenina en la Educación Superior por parte de otras mujeres. Mostraré que las mujeres todavía tienen que esforzarse por ser amigas, en vez de continuar perpetrando la violencia horizontal que ejercen entre sí.

Palabras clave: Hillary Clinton; Donald Trump; entablar amistad entre mujeres; violencia horizontal.

Sumario: 1. Introduction. 2. The Highest Glass Ceiling, Still Unbroken in USA. 3. Befriending Girls and Women. 4. Connection to the 2016 Election in the USA. 5. Befriending Women in Presidential Elections. 6. Conclusion.

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1. Introduction

During the summer, 2016, many feminist scholars in the USA celebrated, as Hillary Clinton (HC) became the first woman selected by a major political party (Democratic), to run for president. They also watched in horror live telecasts of the Republican party's summer convention, where prominent dignitaries and speakers seemed to silently endorse the chants of "Lock her up!" shouted out by extreme party members. While everyone agreed that Clinton was highly qualified with thirty plus years of experience working on behalf of women and children in the US, concerns about her trustworthiness hung over her campaign for more than a year.

Clinton's platform was one of unity and inclusion while the Republican nominee's platform was one of fear and hate for "others" (non-white, non-Judeo-Christian Americans). It was depressing during the fall campaign to realize the only reason a woman might finally be elected president in the USA was because the person she was running against was corrupt, inexperienced, racist, and clearly misogynist. November 9, 2016 brought the USA, and the world, the shock and horror of learning that Hillary Clinton lost the presidential election to Donald Trump (DT), even though she won the popular vote by close to three million more votes (2.86 million).

For this paper, I will consider the 2016 USA's presidential election as a current example of the horizontal violence that (white) women perpetrate on each other, thus extending my earlier work analyzing the treatment of women faculty in higher education by other women¹. It seems clear that white women still struggle with efforts to befriend rather than perpetrate horizontal violence on each other since 53% of white women (45% of whom have college degrees) voted for Donald Trump instead of Hillary Clinton (CNN exit poll)². I will present the reasons given for why white women voted the way they did and analyze these results in terms of befriending women.

¹ B. Thayer-Bacon, "Befriending (White) Women Faculty in Higher Education?" en *Advancing Women in Leadership* 31, 2011, 23-33. Also republished in: B. Thayer-Bacon, L. Stone & K. Sprecher (eds.), *Education Feminism: Classic and Contemporary Readings*, New York, State of New York University Press, 2013.

² S. E. Cupp, "Trump is right – more women should have voted", in *CNN*, 2017. Last access: 19/05/2017. <http://www.cnn.com/2017/01/23/opinions/trump-women-vote-opinion-cupp/>

2. The Highest Glass Ceiling, Still Unbroken in USA

In analysis of the 2016 election results, based on numerous on-line essays written by various authors between November 10, 2016 - January 26, 2017, published in diverse outlets such as *Chicago Tribune*, *NY Times Magazine*, *Fortune*, *The Atlantic*, *Time Insider*, *Five Thirty Eight*, *Pop Sugar*, and *The Huffington Post*, all authors cite the CNN exit poll numbers of 53% white women voted for Trump. In contrast, 94% of Black women and 68% of Latinas voted for Clinton. While Clinton carried women's vote by 12 points overall, it was the women of color who gave her that edge. Contrary to women of color, white women have in fact been voting majority Republican for a long time (53-56% Republican), thus Clinton was able to peel away some Republican women voters, but not as many as Obama did in 2008 (he got 46% to her 43% of white women's votes). In an earlier essay on white women in higher education³, I argue that overall white women are more critical of each other than they are of men, and that this lack of befriending each other serves as an example of horizontal violence⁴ that is gender and race based. The reasons white women give for their lack of support for Clinton are as varied as the women are, however I share what I have found and further extend my earlier analysis. Two personal, not previously published vignettes:

Story 1

In fall, 1998, my parents came to visit me while I was on sabbatical in NYC. It was then that I first heard a white woman express her hatred for HC so vehemently, and that woman was my mother. This was right in the middle of the impeachment hearings of President Bill Clinton. His charges were obstruction of justice and perjury, both in regards to the Monica Lewinsky scandal (a White House employee he was involved with sexually), of which he was acquitted in 1999. I was surprised by my mother's strong emotions expressed against HC and talked to her at length, trying to understand her view. My mother admitted Hillary had not done anything wrong and was under no investigation but she still seemed to blame her for "this mess." It reminded me of when I went through my divorce, and I felt like I was blamed by the women in my life (mother, mother-in-law, and sister) for the failure of my marriage.

In the articles I read, one reason white women gave for not voting for HC was that they lost respect for her when she didn't stand up for herself with her husband's womanizing and cheating. However, I think she was "damned if she did, and damned if she didn't" as I found myself damned for standing up for myself against an emotionally abusive husband. When I confronted my mother on the impossible role HC was in, she informed me that she already was suspicious of Hillary prior to Bill's impeachment, with the Republicans investigating the Clintons for the "Whitewater scandal." Whitewater Development Corporation was a failed business venture in the 1970s and 1980s with the Clintons' associates, Jim and Susan McDougal. After extensive investigation over several years, 1992-1994, no indictments were made against the Clintons related to the land deal during the years Bill Clinton was governor in Arkansas (1978-1980, 1982-1992). Neither Bill nor Hillary Clinton was ever

³ B. Thayer-Bacon, *op. cit.*

⁴ Cf. P. Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. M. Bergman Ramos, New York, Seabury Press, 1970.

prosecuted, after three separate inquiries found insufficient evidence linking them with the criminal conduct of others related to the land deal.

My mother voted Republican her entire adult life, and did not consider herself a feminist, although she raised me to be one. Like 56% of white women in the 2016 election, she was a housewife and help mate, who felt guilty and stressed when she had to be in charge while my father was away on military assignments, and relieved when he would return home. She believed, like the 56% white women express today, that the burdens of leadership outweigh the rewards. As Dahleen Glanton points out in her analysis, Black women are three times more likely to seek power than white women. Their long history of patriarchy has made them used to being in control. Glanton shows us that white women (45% of them hold college degrees) selected an unqualified man over a woman who could run circles around him, and justified their votes by making the case that he was a better fit⁵. Sound familiar? I wonder what they think today about their vote, now that Trump is President, and he has demonstrated his lack of leadership skills, succeeding in signing only one law, concerning tax reform, in his entire first year in office and firing more people than he hired during his first year in office than any previous president in the history of the USA.

Story 2

There are many women in Arkansas who developed a hatred for HC during the years she was First Lady in Arkansas (Bill Clinton was governor 1978-1980, 1982-1992). At a February, 2017 conference dinner, seated next to a woman from Arkansas who is earning her doctorate degree, I was told that the women in Arkansas hate HC, and would never vote for her. Why, I asked? They perceive her to be “uppity” and believe that she treated them with disdain, “like the dirt on her shoes”. I wonder if HC’s desire for privacy and her reserved nature caused women from Arkansas to feel like she considered herself superior to them? I also wonder if her growing up in the North instead of the South caused them to translate her northern style of relating and communicating as not warm or friendly, and basically as “rude”?

Bill Clinton was also accused of having affairs while Governor of Arkansas, and again this apparent infidelity was blamed on HC. HC was accused of being frigid, or a lesbian, as explanations for her husband’s indiscretions. What these examples illustrate for me is the severe criticism women will use against each other, while they will forgive multiple transgressions with a man. I refer to this, following Freire⁶, as *horizontal violence*. Donald Trump has been married and divorced twice, is now married for the third time to a highly successful fashion model originally from Slovenia, Melania Trump. He has been accused of rape, and sexual harassment, and has called women “pigs”, and yet white women were still willing to vote for him. They forgave him these overt transgressions against women, declared the election was not about gender or race, sexism and racism are things of the past, and described HC as more elitist than DT! DT is a multi-billionaire businessman who never served his country in terms of the military, elected office, or through his work, until becoming the 45th

⁵ D. Glanton, “White women, own up to it: You’re the reason Hillary Clinton lost”, in *Chicago Tribune*, 2016. Last access: 19/05/2017. <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/columnists/glanton/ct-white-women-glanton-20161118-column.html>

⁶ Cf. P. Freire, *op. cit.*

president of the country. He is not even on record as having given charitably to causes, but instead only on record for trying to benefit himself financially. In fact, he is on record for not paying workers for their contracted costs and labor, and scamming students in a fake university. HC has served her community, state, and country for over 30 years. How could white women vote for DT over HC? Since being elected it has been revealed that DT has had multiple sexual affairs with other women while married to Melania, and the women were paid to be silent to keep the affairs secret and not influence his election. Also, there are serious concerns that DT is trading influence in the White House for financial gain. The one law he has signed, concerning tax reform, is benefitting the wealthiest people in the USA, including him, while increasing the nation's financial debt significantly.

I share these stories as they illustrate the reasons white women gave for not voting for HC. Since the election we have learned that Facebook was used by Russian hackers to influence the USA presidential election, with particular "swing states" targeted, and particular audiences, such as white women. The commercials, blogs, and tweets worked, and DT won the election. If we turn to looking at the hidden curriculum little (white) girls learn in school, maybe that will help us better understand their vulnerability to being easily influenced against each other.

3. Befriending Girls and Women⁷

In 2002, Susan Laird presented a paper to the USA's Philosophy of Education Society titled, "Befriending Girls as an Educational Life-Practice". In this paper she makes the case for a need to name an educational life-practice that seeks to give the gift of friendship to girls. This gift labor can be given individually or collectively, privately or publicly, professionally or non-professionally, as a direct or indirect gift that is material or spiritual, given by men or women. Laird uses the term, *befriending*, to distinguish holding on to friendship for oneself, versus giving friendship, a gift offered that any girl may accept or reject. Laird's aim is to assist and affirm "*girls' growing capacities and responsibilities for learning to love themselves and diverse others, including the non-human natural world, to survive and thrive despite their troubles*"⁸.

Laird addresses the issue of how she is defining "girls" and "women" with the help of Iris Marion Young's (1997) feminist concept of "gender as a series"⁹ that allows us to recognize that girls come from a variety of differing social class backgrounds, religious beliefs, ethnicities, physical shapes and sizes, shades and hues of skin color, with different sexual orientations and they may respond to gender in different ways. Still, Laird stresses that girls have bodies that menstruate, and while these biological facts alone don't locate individuals in the series "girls," "[s]ocial rules and practices surrounding menarche construct gender as a principle both for division of labor and for compulsory heterosexuality, thus constituting girls in a relation

⁷ This section comes from my earlier essay, B. Thayer-Bacon, *op. cit.*

⁸ S. Laird, "Befriending Girls as an Educational Life-Practice", in S. Fletcher, *Philosophy of Education Yearbook 2002*, Urbana, IL, Philosophy of Education Society, 2003, pp. 73-81, here p. 77 (italics in original).

⁹ I. M. Young, "Gender as Seriality", in *Intersecting Voices*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1997.

of growing vulnerability to boys' and men's appropriation"¹⁰. Girls can have much in common or very little, performing gender in a variety of ways, from embracing highly sexualized forms to resisting gender norms to the point of being identified as a boy. "Yet all these girls, even the lucky one who wonders, are confronting gender effects in others, if not themselves, whether they are yet more than dimly conscious of such effects or not"¹¹. Laird describes *befriending girls* with loving attention, so that gender-sensitivity will also allow us to attend to girls in all their diversity. Laird recommends that to befriend girls we need to take "a macroscopic perspective that is open and fluid, sensitive also to other serialities and their consequential interactions with gender, variously narrated and divergently theorized"¹².

Befriending girls is political life-practice but also an educational life-practice, according to Laird. It can occur in any setting. As a political practice befriending girls can become a means of girls' resisting oppression, but it can also be used to foster oppression, it is not necessarily good. Befriending girls can be done in ways that are manipulative, aimless, or unreflective, that teach girls hidden curriculums or it can be done in ways that teach girls how to resist hidden curricula. Befriending girls can be used in miseducative ways if unevenly and unreflectively bestowed, especially in schools, so that befriending can become a "dispensing of favoritism and privilege to some girls at other girls' expenses"¹³. There is always a risk in befriending girls as to whether or not the girls will even accept such friendship, as the girls have the freedom to pick their own friends. "As an adult commitment, therefore, befriending girls makes its practitioners vulnerable to griefs, disappointments, delusions, temptations, and risks both large and small"¹⁴.

If we are to undertake befriending girls seriously, Laird recommends we must actively engage in *self-educative self-befriending*, "a practice that can simultaneously present possible instructive examples for girls learning to love themselves, survive, and thrive despite difficulties"¹⁵. This self-educative self-befriending entails "*befriending women* and learning from us about our myriad ways of loving, surviving, and thriving despite our adult difficulties"¹⁶. Laird recommends "a spiritual discipline composed of activities such as attention, study, self-examination, consciousness-raising, service, guiding, exploration, play, bearing witness, letting go, celebration, and giving" to help us engage in self-educative self-befriending¹⁷.

In a response to Laird's essay, a former doctoral student of mine, Katharine Sprecher, wrote about the difficulty women face learning to love ourselves, to heal, and fully befriend other women. Sprecher gives several examples of times she has worked with various groups of feminist women only to find their good intentions go awry "in the face of deeply embedded behavior patterns, expectations, and wounds"¹⁸. It

¹⁰ S. Laird, *op. cit.*, p. 76.

¹¹ *Ibidem*.

¹² *Ibidem*, p. 77.

¹³ *Ibidem*, p. 74.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 80.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, italics in original.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*.

¹⁸ K. Sprecher, "Response Paper: Susan Laird's «Befriending Girls»", in CSE 544, *Contemporary Philosophy of Education*, Knoxville, TN, University of Tennessee, 2008, p. 2.

This phrase is in reference to Barbara McKellar's essay, "Only the Fittest of the Fittest Will Survive: Black Women and Education", in B. Thayer-Bacon, L. Stone, & K. Sprecher (eds.), *op. cit.* pp. 111-124.

is not easy to learn to love ourselves and other women “in a society that has taught us since we were children to mistrust, disrespect, denigrate, and often hate all that is female, including ourselves”¹⁹. Sprecher reminds us that we are bombarded by negative messages about women from all forms of media such as the radio, television, magazines, billboards, etc. She also points out that “in a male supremacist society, it is not safe for women to express and feel anger towards men [...] we have instead learned to direct suppressed angers at safe targets like other women, children and ourselves”²⁰. Laird’s call to engage in self-educative self-befriending in order to have a chance at successfully befriending girls, is not going to be easy for women who grew up, and continue to live, in a patriarchal, sexist society. It will require a proactive commitment to self-healing that is on-going.

Sprecher points us to a problem for women that Paulo Freire described quite well in his chapter one of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. For Freire, his description of oppression focuses on socio-economic class issues, but his analysis works well for other categories of discrimination too, such as race, sexual orientation, and gender. Freire explores the relationship that exists between the oppressor and the oppressed and how the oppressed will identify with the oppressor and “have no consciousness of themselves as persons or as members of an oppressed class”²¹. He describes how people who are oppressed unconsciously internalize their oppression, and find in their oppressor their model of freedom and adulthood. When they have the opportunity to seize a little power and acquire land, in Freire’s example, they will use that power to turn on others like themselves, and become even more tyrannical bosses over the workers that were once their co-workers, than the owners were toward them. Freire points to examples where men, in the public world of work, go from working on a factory line or for a landowner to becoming the foreman. However, we can see this same phenomena in the private world of homes, where men who have little power in their public worlds come home and act abusively toward their wives, and where women who have little power and freedom in their married relationships will turn around and be tyrants with their children. We see this with older siblings in abusive home settings who will in-turn be abusive toward their younger siblings. It is a cycle of oppression that is difficult to break.

Freire says that “the oppressor, who is himself dehumanized because he dehumanizes others, is unable to lead the struggle” for a fuller humanity²². “Any attempt to «soften» the power of the oppressor in deference to the weakness of the oppressed almost always manifests itself in the form of false generosity”²³. “It is only the oppressed, who, by freeing themselves, can free their oppressors”²⁴. How do the oppressed free themselves, and thus their oppressors? Through love; in learning to love themselves and each other, they free themselves and each other. They learn to perceive the reality of their oppression as a limiting situation that can be transformed rather than as a fixed reality. Freire’s act of love points us right back to Laird’s idea of befriending, and the importance of self-befriending as part of the healing process from experiences of oppression.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 2.

²⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 3.

²¹ P. Freire, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

²² *Ibidem*, p. 32.

²³ *Ibidem*, p. 29.

²⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 42.

4. Connection to the 2016 Election in the USA

How does Laird's and Freire's work connect back to the USA's 2016 presidential election? The white women who did not vote for Hillary Clinton in 2016 were once little girls in need of befriending. They grew up in a sexist society surrounded by negative messages about girls and women, as well as being continually exposed to the modeling of behavior that puts boys and men's needs ahead of girls and women. They learned about *his* story, and how to write, speak, and think like a man, so they would be listened to and treated as respectable and smart. For the women who earned college degrees, they got the grades, passed the exams, and defended their senior project, master's thesis, or doctoral dissertation. Like the workers who become foremen, we find them in professional jobs such as higher education, and now they exert power in abusive forms on students and colleagues, as I have written about elsewhere²⁵.

During the second wave of feminism (1960's-80's) there was a significant amount of research generated on gender discrimination issues in schools (Frazier & Sadker, 1973; Sadker & Sadker, 1982; Spender, 1982, Stanworth, 1983). Researchers studied language patterns in classroom discussions such as direct speech versus indirect, qualified speech, who was called on more often by teachers, who had opportunities to correct their mistaken answers, or not, how what was said was received by the teacher and classmates, etcetera (Association of American College, 1982; American Association of University Women, 1992). Researchers noted biases in textbooks (Sadker & Sadker), gendered discipline patterns, and scholars debated ways to counter "gender bias" in our schools, with "gender free" educational practices that sought to ignore and disregard gender, versus "gender sensitive" educational practices that sought to pay more attention to gender, not less, and take a situational strategy that can be self-correcting and maintains a constant vigilance (Diller, Houston, Morgan, & Ayim, 1996). Added to the complexity of gender bias in our schools that researchers discovered, we also learned that even if teachers may ignore gender (which they do not), *students* do not, and this triggered a whole other layer of research that was developed during the second wave of feminism (Houston, 1994).

When one grows up in a society where men and boys have more power than women and girls, mothers teach their little girls what they have learned, the importance of being able to communicate with and relate to those who have more power, for one's own safety and protection. In the language of Freire, the possible chances of improving one's conditions depend on the ability to understand those in power, "the oppressors". Little (white) girls already come to school knowing how to befriend little boys, however we learned in second wave feminist research that little girls don't know how to do this befriending for each other. Instead they compete against each other for the boys' attention, often enacting passive/aggressive forms of horizontal violence against each other.

What about girls of color and/or working class girls? How do they fair in terms of their relationships with each other, against multiple forms of oppression? Are girls of color better able to nurture each other, due to their common experiences of racial discrimination and class oppression? Although the research is critically lacking, it appears to be so. While patriarchy alone causes girls to fight against each other for

²⁵ B. Thayer-Bacon, *op. cit.*

boys' attentions, racism positions girls of color in camaraderie with each other and boys of color, in order to protect their community against the dangers of racism (Fordham, 1993). This may help us understand why women of color were overwhelming more supportive of HC as a presidential candidate than white women.

In 2000, Jane Roland Martin came out with an examination of present conditions for women in higher education, presented like a report, as if she had been charged by The Society of Feminist Scholars and Their Friends to study the lay of the land and report back to the general public. In her report back, Martin describes how women are more critical of other women's work than they are of men's. Just as when they were little girls and they ignored their sisters points but attended receptively to what the little boys had to say, as scholars women tend to be much harsher critics of their sisters (other female scholars) while being forgiving and generous to male scholarship. This is what little girls from HC's and my generation saw modeled each day they were in school, as well as in their informal education at home, in church, in the media, and in their community. Society taught us to be more critical of each other and more forgiving of males. It taught us to discount female contributions but take seriously what males have to say. I'm not convinced things have improved that much for the current generation of white girls either, although based on the 2016 election results, girls of color have different experiences. From a Freirian perspective, white females learned that dominant power is in the hands of males, they are the gatekeepers (in school they were the principals and superintendents, in higher education they are the deans and department heads, in churches they are the pastors and ministers, overall).

Research shows women and men, as college and university students, tend to be more critical of female professors than of male²⁶. Men can maintain a distant relationship with their students and be perceived as objective, principled, and professional, while women faculty will be perceived as distant, unapproachable, and cold. Men can embrace a more connected and personal role as a professor and make themselves stand out as outstanding teachers as a result, often nominated for "teacher of the year" awards by their students for being so caring. However, students expect their female professors to be more nurturing, as women, and do not give them any recognition when they do so, rather they are critical of them if they do not. At the same time students expect scholastic rigor. Feminists discuss this as "the bearded mother" syndrome²⁷. There is also research that shows work that is submitted for grading by professors, or for review for publication in journals, or acceptance for a conference program, if the very same work has a woman's name on it, it will be more harshly critiqued, given a lower grade, and/or be less likely to be accepted for publication or presentation²⁸. Men and women judge women's work more harshly than they do men's. As Martin says²⁹, women are held to "a higher double standard of intellectual «prowess»". Such judgments keep women in higher education from getting hired, tenured, promoted, and awarded in all the ways that faculty in higher education are

²⁶ J. R. Martin, *Coming of Age in Academe: Rekindling Women's Hopes and Reforming the Academy*, New York, London, Routledge, 2000.

²⁷ Cf. K. Morgan, "The Perils and Paradoxes of Feminist Pedagogy", in *Resources for Feminist Research* 16, 1987, p. 50; D. Bogdan, "When is a singing school (not) a chorus? The emancipatory agenda in feminist pedagogy and literature education", in B. Thayer-Bacon, L. Stone, & K. Sprecher (eds.), *op. cit.*, pp. 229-238.

²⁸ Cf. J. R. Martin, *op. cit.*

²⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 92.

awarded. As Martin points out in her report, where women were once excluded from higher education, they are now contained. As this relates to the 2016 USA election, such judgments keep women in politics from breaking the highest glass ceiling. The critiques of women professors are the same critiques we heard about HC during the campaign.

5. Befriending Women in Presidential Elections

What would it mean to befriend women during political elections, and for women to actively engage in *self-educative self-befriending*? Both Laird and Freire point us in the direction of love. The oppressed (women in politics) free themselves, and thus their oppressors (men in politics), by learning to love themselves and each other. We have learned that white women are struggling against very deep-seeded fears, and pain. Only the fittest of the fit survive to become professionals such as lawyers, doctors, and professors. Those who have survived have learned how to overcome the oppressive, harmful conditions encountered through milieu education (television, films, and songs, etc.), our informal education (home, church, community, and peers), and our formal education (school, teachers, textbooks, principals, and guidance counselors)³⁰. If we have learned to overcome our oppressive sexist conditions by becoming oppressors ourselves, as so many others have done in dealing with racist and classist conditions, then we fit right into Freire's description of how people deal with oppressive conditions. White women as voters who commit horizontal violence on their colleagues are no better or worse than all those others who fight violence with violence, and become oppressors themselves.

I am a pacifist at heart. I do believe in the power of love. While I am a pacifist, I am also a fighter who will defend myself from harm. In my earlier essay I wrote: "Standing up to bullying behavior in higher education means turning to policies and procedures for help". But, what do we do to stand up to bullying behavior when that bully is now the President of our country? We have to hope our constitution is strong enough to protect us, and our courts will hold even our president accountable for his behavior.

White women, like all voters, want to feel included and valued for what they have to contribute. They want to be heard, and know that their views are sought out, not ignored, belittled, or dismissed. They want to be treated with respect and recognized for their contributions. My suspicion is that the more we find ways to offer support for white women, and help them in their efforts to grow and thrive, the more we make room for them and find ways to let them contribute to the political process, the more we can consistently show white women that we value them and appreciate their contributions, the more we will find white women helping to improve conditions in our election process, rather than generating harmful conditions. These are acts of love, including efforts to hold white women accountable for their acts of horizontal violence. I take great heart in the activism women have embraced since DT was elected, including the Women's March that occurred around the world the day after his inauguration, the "MeToo" movement that has taken hold addressing men's se-

³⁰ H. S. Broudy, "Definition of education", in H. S. Broudy, *Building a Philosophy of Education*, New York, Prentice-Hall, 1954.

xual violence against women and girls (as well as men and boys), and the increased number of women stepping forward to run for office for the first time in their lives (and they are winning!).

6. Conclusion

My hope in writing this essay is to get us talking about “the elephant in the room”, the chilly climate generated by some women in the presidential election process which most of us (men and women) experience. This is not an easy topic, for most of us are aware that little girls and boys in America grow up in a sexist society that favors boys over girls in so many ways. I have tried to remind us of ways that sexism manifests itself and that little girls are victims of that sexism not only in our schools, but when they walk out of the school building as well. There are committed, caring men and women who work hard to try and address gender inequity problems and concerns, and one of them is Hillary Clinton. No matter how hard we work to address these issues, we cannot ignore the fact that every day little girls grow up under harmful conditions that effect who they become. Sexism harms little boys too. I have tried to remind us of sexism’s harm to oppressors as well as the oppressed by connecting this gender equity issue to Freire’s analysis of oppression.

I wrote this essay as one who has grown up experiencing sexist treatment, not just in school, but also at home and in my larger community. I have had to learn to self-educate and befriend myself, something I continue to work on as I seek to heal from the harm that continues to be done to me, much of that harm being unintentional. It is bad enough to have to worry about the harms others who hold more power than us might do to us. It is even worse to have to worry about the harm we seek to do to each other. It is my concern for the horizontal violence that white women do to each other, in particular white women from my generation, the baby boomers, which has motivated me to write this essay. I have experienced this horizontal violence myself, watched many others experience it, and have had to step in and try to help protect students and colleagues from this violence, as a department head and program coordinator.

As Martin recommends³¹, and many of us have discovered during our careers in higher education, we need to reject the idea of a female essence, but we should not reject the concept of *women* itself, as it is how the world perceives us. Martin warns us that rejecting *women* will lead to a lack of self-understanding and our own containment. Studying *women* will help us better understand those we work with and help us heal, befriend, and even learn to love each other. Maybe we will find the courage to elect a woman president of our country (USA) in my lifetime, still. I have not given up hope, but I certainly have found 2016’s election to be a disappointing set-back.

³¹ J. R. Martin, *op. cit.*